

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 CAPE T 00169 01 OF 02 191619Z

40

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----- 025614

R 191537Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4961

INFO AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 CAPE TOWN 0169

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, AO, SF, RH, WA

SUBJ: CONVERSATION WITH PM VORSTER

SUMMARY: PM DESCRIBED SITUATION IN ANGOLA, RHODESIA AND SWA. HE IS HOPEFUL THAT UNDERSTANDING CAN BE REACHED WITH MPLA BUT IS PREPARED TO USE FORCE AGAINST ANY ATTEMPT TO DISLODGE SOUTH AFRICAN TROOPS FROM POSITIONS THEY NOW HOLD IN ABSENCE OF SUCH AN UNDERSTANDING. HE IS PESSIMISTIC ABOUT RHODESIA BUT UNWILLING TO APPLY ANY FURTHER PRESSURE ON SMITH. HE SEES NO NEED TO CHANGE COURSE OF CONSTITUTIONAL TALKS IN SWA. HE BELIEVES THE US HAS DONE ITSELF IRREPARABLE HARM IN AFRICA BY ITS FAILURE TO BLOCK SOVIETS IN ANGOLA, AND REGARDS US AS INDECISIVE AND UNRELIABLE. END SUMMARY.

1. I HAD A TOUR DE HORIZON WITH PRIME MINISTER

VORSTER ON EVENING FEBRUARY 18. MEETING ARRANGED AT MY INITIATIVE PREPARATORY TO MY TRIP TO WASHINGTON.

2. I OPENED THE CONVERSATION BY SAYING THAT I WOULD APPRECIATE HAVING HIS ASSESSMENT OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 CAPE T 00169 01 OF 02 191619Z

IN ANGOLA, RHODESIA AND SWA, AND THEIR IMPACT ON SOUTH

AFRICA ITSELF. HE COVERED THESE IN HIS USUAL FRANK, DISPASSIONATE MANNER AND THEN WENT ON TO GIVE ME HIS PERSPECTIVE OF THE US POSITION IN AFRICA IN THE WAKE OF THE ANGOLAN CRISIS. A NOTE OF PESSIMISM AND DISILLUSIONMENT RAN THROUGH HIS PRESENTATION.

3. ANGOLA: HE SAID THAT SOUTH AFRICAN TROOPS OCCUPY THE AREAS AROUND ROSCANA AND CALUEQUE AND THE FOUR REFUGEE CAMPS ALONG OR NEAR THE BORDER. HE READ ME THE DAILY INTELLIGENCE REPORTS PREPARED BY BOSS FOR FEBRUARY 17 AND 18 INDICATING THAT THE MPLA-CUBAN FORCES OCCUPIED A LINE RUNNING ROUGHLY FROM MOCAMEDES TO SA DE BANDEIRA TO SERPA PINTO. HE NOTED THAT SOME 200 KILOMETERS SEPARATED THE TWO FORCES AND THAT THE MPLA-CUBAN TROOPS SEEMED TO HAVE HALTED THEIR FORWARD ADVANCE AT LEAST FOR THE MOMENT. REFERRING TO PRESS SPECULATION ABOUT NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN MPLA AND SAG, I ASKED HIM HOW HE SAW THE PROSPECTS FOR AVOIDING A CLASH BY REACHING SOME FORM OF UNDERSTANDING. WITHOUT SPECIFYING NAMES, HE REPLIED THAT COUNTRIES INTERESTED IN AVOIDING A CLASH IN SOUTHERN ANGOLA HAVE OFFERED TO BE OF ASSISTANCE IN WORKING OUT AN AGREEMENT. HE EMPHASIZED THAT SAG HAS HAD NO DIRECT CONTACTS WITH MPLA AND HAS NOT RECEIVED ANY MESSAGES EVEN INDIRECTLY FROM THE MPLA. IN RESPONSE TO ANOTHER QUESTION ABOUT WHAT AN UNDERSTANDING WITH THE MPLA WOULD HAVE TO COVER, THE PM MENTIONED THESE POINTS: (A) ASSURANCES THAT SAG COULD COMPLETE THE RUACANA-CALUEQUE WORKS IN LINE WITH THE AGREEMENT WITH THE PORTUGUESE, WHICH WILL TAKE ANOTHER TWO YEARS; (B) AGREEMENT ON USE OF THE WATER AND POWER FROM THESE WORKS; (C) ARRANGEMENTS TO TAKE CARE OF REFUGEES IN THE FOUR CAMPS; AND (D) UNDERTAKINGS REGARDING USE OF ANGOLAN TERRITORY AS A HAVEN FOR ATTACKS BY TERRORISTS IN SWA. THE PM SAID HIS ESTIMATE IS THAT THE MPLA-CUBAN FORCES WILL ADVANCE BEYOND PRESENT LINES VERY CAUTIOUSLY AND DELIBERATELY, BUT THERE SHOULD BE NO MISTAKE THAT IF THEY ATTACK SOUTH AFRICAN TROOPS, THESE WILL RESPOND WITH FULL FORCE. (IN AN EARLIER CONVERSATION, DEFENSE CHIEF BIERMANN TOLD ME THAT HE WOULD USE THEIR MIRAGES

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 CAPE T 00169 01 OF 02 191619Z

IN REPULSING AND PUNISHING THE ATTACKERS.)
"WE ARE NOT LOOKING FOR A FIGHT," THE PM OBSERVED, "BUT WILL NOT SHRINK FROM IT IF IT IS FORCED ON US."

4. REFUGEES: THE PM SAID THAT THE REFUGEE PROBLEM WAS BECOMING ACUTE. THE UN SYG WILL APPARENTLY DO NOTHING. HE DESCRIBED THE UN ATTITUDE AS INEXPLICABLE AND UNACCEPTABLE. THE SAG IS NOW TRYING TO INTEREST

THE ICRC IN ASSUMING RESPONSIBILITY. IF THIS EFFORT FAILS, HE WILL HAVE NO OTHER ALTERNATIVE BECAUSE OF THE EXCESSIVE COST BUT TO INFORM THE UN THAT BY A GIVEN DATE SOUTH AFRICA WOULD STOP ITS SUPPORT OF THE CAMPS. THIS WOULD PROBABLY RESULT IN MUCH HUMAN SUFFERING, HE NOTED. THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE MAY TRY TO CROSS INTO SWA. SA WOULD HAVE TO TAKE PREVENTIVE MEASURES. A VERY DIFFICULT SITUATION FOR SA COULD ARISE BUT THAT RISK WOULD HAVE TO BE RUN.

5. RHODESIA: PRIVATELY, VORSTER SAID, HE WOULD TELL ME THAT THE PROSPECTS FOR A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT ARE NOT GOOD. NKOMO WILL KEEP TRYING FOR A WHILE LONGER. IF HE FAILS, NKOMO BECOMES IRRELEVANT AND THE CHANCES FOR AVOIDING A VIOLENT SOLUTION GREATLY REDUCED. THE STEP-UP IN GUERRILLA ACTIVITY IS ALREADY EVIDENT. VORSTER EXPECTS THIS TO STEADILY INCREASE. WHILE HE HAS NO PRESENT EVIDENCE OF CUBAN INVOLVEMENT OR LARGE SOVIET ARMS DELIVERIES, HE EXPECTS THAT IN TIME THIS MAY WELL HAPPEN. VORSTER SAID THAT HE HAS NOT SEEN SMITH SINCE LAST YEAR. CONFIDENTIALLY, HE WOULD TELL ME THAT HE MET WITH A RHODESIAN MINISTER (UNNAMED) TWO DAYS AGO DURING WHICH TIME HE REVIEWED THE ALTERNATIVES AND CONSEQUENCES CONFRONTING RHODESIA IF AGREEMENT IS NOT REACHED WITH NKOMO. HE ALSO MADE IT UNMISTAKEABLY CLEAR THAT SMITH SHOULD NOT RPT NOT COUNT ON SAG ASSISTANCE WHEN THE GOING GOT TOUGH. I ASKED THE PM WHETHER SMITH'S STRATEGY MIGHT NOT BE PRECISELY TO GAMBLE ON PUBLIC OPINION IN SA DEMANDING THAT HE LEND SUPPORT. VORSTER SAID HE SUSPECTED THAT THIS WAS THE CASE AND THAT IS WHY HE SENT BACK WORD THAT SMITH SHOULD DISABUSE HIMSELF OF THIS EXPECTATION. AT THE SAME TIME THE PM NOTED THAT IF THE FIGHTING REACHED THE POINT WHERE WHITE WOMEN

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 CAPE T 00169 01 OF 02 191619Z

AND CHILDREN WERE BEING SLAUGHTERED, HE WOULD BE UNDER INTENSE PRESSURE TO INTERVENE IN RHODESIA. GIVEN THESE PROSPECTS, I INQUIRED WHETHER HE HAD UNDER CONSIDERATION ANY ADDITIONAL STEPS TO PERSUADE SMITH TO REACH A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT. VORSTER REPLIED THAT HE HAD GONE AS FAR AS HE IS PREPARED TO GO. HE EMPHATICALLY STATED THAT HE HAS NOT, AND WILL NOT, TRY TO COERCE SMITH WITH THREATS OR SANCTIONS. HE HAD TOLD THE BRITISH THIS A FEW DAYS BEFORE.

6. NAMIBIA: VORSTER SAID THAT EVENTS IN ANGOLA HAD NOT MADE HIM ALTER HIS VIEWS ON THE PACE OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL TALKS. THE PARTICIPANTS MUST DECIDE THE TIMETABLE. THE ESTIMATE OF 2-3 YEARS IS PROBABLY A REALISTIC ONE SINCE "I CANNOT GET THE MEMBERS TO WALK

FASTER THAN THEY ARE ABLE." IF THERE IS TROUBLE WITH
MPLA ON THE FRONTIER, THE PM DID NOT THINK THAT IT
WOULD MATERIALLY AFFECT THE PACE OR OUTCOME OF THE TALKS.
HE SAW NO REASON FOR TRYING TO ACCELERATE THE PROCESS.

BOWDLER

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 CAPE T 00169 02 OF 02 200717Z

11

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----- 038924

R 191537Z FEB 76
FM AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4962
INFO AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 CAPE TOWN 0169

EXDIS

7. RELATIONS WITH THE US: THE PM SAID THAT THE ANGOLAN
EXPERIENCE HAD MADE HIM LOSE CONFIDENCE IN THE US.
THE SOVIETS HAD SHOWN UP THE US AS INDECISIVE AND
UNRELIABLE. THE BLACK AFRICANS ADMIRE STRENGTH. THE
SOVIETS SHOWED IT; THE US DID NOT. THE WEAK GRAVITATE
TOWARD THE STRONG, AND THE US WILL SEE THIS HAPPENING
IN THE MONTHS AHEAD. I TOLD HIM THE FINAL BALANCE SHEET
ON ANGOLA HAD NOT BEEN DRAWN UP. THE BLATANT SOVIET-
CUBAN INTERVENTION HAD FRIGHTENED NATIONALISTS THROUGHOUT
THE CONTINENT. CONTINUED MASSIVE PRESENCE OF CUBANS
AND SOVIETS COULD HAVE THE OPPOSITE EFFECT. VORSTER
OBVIOUSLY REMAINED UNCONVINCED. THE PM WENT ON TO SAY
THAT HE WAS APPALLED BY THE STORIES COMING OUT OF
WASHINGTON ON THE ANGOLAN SITUATION. HE SEEMED TO BE
REFERRING PARTICULARLY TO THE "TELL-ALL" ACCOUNTS OF
MORAN AND COUGHLIN. HE SAID SOME WERE OUTRIGHT UNTRUE,
OTHERS DISTORTED AND ALL UNHELPFUL NOT ONLY TO SOUTH
AFRICA BUT VARIOUS BLACK AFRICAN STATES. HE WAS

ESPECIALLY BITTER ABOUT STORIES INVOLVING MPLA-SAG
CONTACTS REGARDING THE BORDER SITUATION. IN CONCLUSION,
VORSTER RETURNED TO CUBAN-SOVIET INTENTIONS. HE SAID
HE IS CONFIDENT THAT THE FAILURE OF THE WEST TO ACT
HAS WHETTED SOVIET-CUBAN APPETITES IN AFRICA. THE
ANGOLA EXPERIENCE HAS DEMONSTRATED THAT THEY CAN ACT
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 CAPE T 00169 02 OF 02 200717Z

WITH VIRTUAL IMPUNITY. FOLLOWING A PERIOD OF
CONSOLIDATION, HE EXPECTS THEM TO PUSH THEIR CAMPAIGN
IN SOUTHERN AFRICA, MOST LIKELY DIRECTED FIRST AGAINST
RHODESIA. THE CUBANS HAVE CREATED A LOT OF BITTERNESS
BY KILLING BLACKS IN ANGOLA. THE ONLY WAY TO OFFSET
THIS ANIMOSITY IS TO EXPLAIN THAT THEY HAD TO DO WHAT
THEY DID IN ORDER TO PROCEED AGAINST THE ULTIMATE
TARGET: THE WHITE MAN IN RHODESIA AND SOUTH AFRICA;
AND THEN BEGIN TO PUT THOSE WORDS INTO PRACTICE. HE
IS CONVINCED THAT THE US WILL NOT REACT ANY DIFFERENTLY
WHEN THIS OCCURS. THE CUBANS AND THE RUSSIANS COULD
BE SO BOLD AS TO MAKE A LANDING IN SALDANHA BAY OR
CAPE AGULHAS AND THE US WOULD NOT RAISE A FINGER.

8. COMMENT: MAKING ALLOWANCES FOR EFFECT, THE PRIME
MINISTER'S ASSESSMENT REFLECTS THE MOOD OF THE COUNTRY.
THE ANGOLAN EXPERIENCE HAS GREATLY HEIGHTENED SOUTH
AFRICA'S SENSE OF VULNERABILITY. SOUTH AFRICANS HAD
BANKED ON THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF SOUTHERN AFRICA
AND THE CAPE ROUTE TO THE "WEST" (READ US) AS OVERRIDING
THEIR SCRUPLES ABOUT APARTHEID. THEY THOUGHT THAT IN
THE FACE OF A SOVIET THRUST SUCH AS THE ONE IN ANGOLA,
THE "WEST" OUT OF SELF-INTEREST WOULD MAKE WHAT COMMON
CAUSE WAS NECESSARY WITH SOUTH AFRICA TO REPEAL THE DANGER.
THIS ARTICLE OF FAITH HAS NOW BEEN SHATTERED. THE EXPERIENCE
FORMS THE BACKDROP TO PRIME MINISTER VORSTER'S GLOOMY
WARNING TO PARLIAMENT TWO WEEKS AGO WHEN HE SAID: "WE HAVE
LEARNED A LESSON IN ANGOLA... THAT WHEN IT COMES TO THE
WORST, SOUTH AFRICA STANDS ALONE."

9. IN THE FACE OF SO PESSIMISTIC AN OUTLOOK, ONE WOULD
EXPECT TO FIND MORE FLEXIBILITY IN THE SAG POSITION ON
NAMIBIA, RHODESIA AND INTERNAL RACIAL POLICIES. THE
PRIME MINISTER SHOWED NONE.
BOWDLER

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS, NEGOTIATIONS, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ElyME
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976CAPET00169
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760063-0779
From: CAPE TOWN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760236/aaaabfcd.tel
Line Count: 270
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 14 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <14 MAY 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <07 SEP 2004 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CONVERSATION WITH PM VORSTER SUMMARY: PM DESCRIBED SITUATION IN ANGOLA, RHODESIA
TAGS: PFOR, AO, SF, RH, WA, US, (SMITH, IAN), (VORSTER, BALTHAZAR J), (NKOMO, JOSHUA)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006